CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

APRIL 1981

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President : Mr G. Sitch Ph. 72 2734
Secretary : Mrs M. Lindsay 72 2720
Treasurer : Mr F. Meyer 72 1958
Newsletter: Mr G. Broadway 72 2513

Monthly meetings of the club are held on the second Friday of the month, at 8 pm. in the Castlemaine Education Centre, above the S.E.C. offices in Mostyn Street.

Club outings are usually held on the Saturday following the monthly meeting.

Visitors and prospective members are most welcome to attend club functions.

Wildflowers of the Castlemaine District

GORSE BITTER PEA

Rita Mills

Daviesia ulicifolia

Flowering : July-September

This prickly little shrub is very common in the local bush; the sharp points at the tips of the 3 mm leaves and stems can ensure quite a rash if a careless walker comes into contact with them as the tips are left in the skin.

The flowers are bright orange and brick red, usually crowded along the stems, have stipules and are fairly small, about 5 mm across.

THE SIMPSON DESERT

by Terry Collins

What a fascinating area this must be to a Naturalist. A delightful article appeared in "The Overlander " magazine of Feb 1980. Written by Michael Richardson the Editor-in-chief, it concerns a trip with one companion plus two vehicles taken last October from Charlotte Waters across the northern section of the desert finishing at Birdsville. They traced the track taken by the Madigan expedition of 1929 whose party consisted of nine men and nineteen camels and which took 25 days to conquer the 616 km. Richardson crossed in eight days; so much for modern transport.

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They left Old Andado homestead on the edge of the desert. Old Andado was built in the 1920's with "waddy" timber which is so hard it cannot be nailed, but only wired. Waddy trees are Acacia peuce and are found in only two locations in the world, at Birdsville and at the North Bore 30 km from the homestead. The largest group of Waddies has been fenced off by the Northern Territory National Parks & Wildlife. These trees resemble Sheoaks but have a different seeding habit, having pods instead of cones.

Although it was October they were kept awake at night by freezing temperatures and the howling of dingoes. Day temperatures got up to 44°C. Then in one section he writes,"Climbing one dune we startled an enormous feral cat. It was the size of a kelpie dog. I have never seen such a huge cat before. If natural selection continues to boost their size, they will soon be bringing down livestock."

Their trip was hazardous, having to cross a total of 631 sand dunes some of which were over 30 m high while the spinifex created many problems. But with the preceeding years having had a higher annual rainfall than usual, (125 mm), the country was well represented by plants. Sturt's Desert Pea, brilliant white Ptilotus, Wattles from 2 - 6 m., Grevilleas to 4 m., and in one valley, thousands of young gums which will probably die during the next dry.

In all an exciting trip and so well written up that you feel if only you had the means to do likewise and take your time to study it all.

SOME BIRD LISTS

In case you have some time on your hands and are wondering what you can use as an excuse to avoid some gardening, sweeping, etc, this month the lift-out centre page consists of four bird check lists.

Now all you have to do is say that you are collecting data for the C.F.N.C. on-going survey of the bird life of the district. In fact you are monitoring the environment. All you have to do is take a pencil, a bird-book preferably, a pair of binoculars and yourself to one of the four localities, depending on your particular fancy and the time available. Once there you settle yourself comfortably and wait for the birds to fly past. As they do so, all you have to do is to tick them off on your list; you don't even have to go to the trouble to write them down. Of course there may occasionally be the thrill of discovering a bird which was previously unrecorded in that area. Your greatest chance of doing this will be at Expedition Pass where the list as printed was compiled mainly over the March camp-out weekend, whereas the lists for the other areas have each been built up over 12 months at least.

Use one column for each outing, write the date in the space at the top of the column, and so we will be able to build up eventually a good picture of bird movement in and through our area.

BIRD LIST - EXPEDITION PASS

Species / Date												
Little Pied Cormorant												
Yellow Billed Spoonbill												
Black Swan												
Black Duck												
Musk Duck												
Black shouldered Kite												
Wedge-tailed Eagle												
Little Eagle												
Coot												
Galah												
Crimson Rosella												
Eastern Rosella												
Fan-tailed Cuckoo												
Spine-tailed Swift												
Kookaburra												
Rainbow Bird												
Blackbird												
Scarlet Robin												
Yellow Robin												
Shrike-tit												
Golden Whistler												
Grey Thrush												
Restless Flycatcher												
Grey Fantail												
Superb Blue Wren												
White-browed Scrub Wren												
Speckled Warbler												
Brown Thornbill												
Yellow-rumped Thornbill												
Striated Thornbill												
White-throated Treecreeper												
Yellow-faced Honeyeater												
White-eared Honeyeater												
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater												
Eastern Spinebill												
Mistletoe Bird												
Spotted Pardalote												
Red-browed Finch												
Whitewinged Chough												
Magpie												
Grey Currawong												
Raven												

BIRD LIST - SETTLING PONDS

Species / Date												
Hoary-headed Grebe												
Little Grebe												
Little Pied Cormorant												
Little Black Cormorant												
White-necked Heron												
White-faced Heron												
White Ibis												
Straw-necked Ibis												
Royal Spoonbill												
Plumed Treeduck												
Black Swan												
Mountain Duck												
Black Duck												
Grey Teal												
Pink-eared Duck												
White-eyed Duck												
Wood Duck												
Musk Duck												
Little Eagle												
Brown Falcon												
Dusky Moorhen												
Swamphen												
Coot												
Spurwing Plover												
Black-fronted Dotterel												
Japanese Snipe												
Silver Gull												
Galah												
Crimson Rosella												
Red-rumped Parrot												
Welcome Swallow												
Fairy Martin												
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike												
Blackbird												
Flame Robin												
Willie Wagtail												
Reed Warbler												
Little Grassbird												
Superb Blue Wren												
Yellow-rumped Thornbill												
Red Wattlebird												
Fuscous Honeyeater												
Silvereye												
Goldfinch												
House Sparrow												
Red-browed Finch												
Starling												
Magpie Lark												
Magpie												

BIRD LIST - CASTLEMAINE GOLF COURSE

Species / Date												
Little Pied Cormorant												
White-necked Heron												
White Ibis												
Peregrine Falcon												
Brown Falcon												
Spurwing Plover												
Black-fronted Dotterel												
Common Bronzewing												
Galah												
Long-billed Corella												
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo												
Musk Lorikeet												
Purple-crowned Lorikeet												
Little lorikeet												
Crimson Rosella												
Eastern Rosella												
Red-rumped Parrot												
Kookaburra												
Welcome Swallow												
Fairy Martin												
Pipit												
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike												
Flame Robin												
Scarlet Robin												
Shrike tit												
Golden Whistler												
Rufous Whistler												
Grey Thrush												
Jacky Winter												
Restless Flycatcher												
Willie Wagtail												
White-browed Babbler												
Superb Blue Wren												
White-browed Scrub Wren												
Speckled Warbler												
Brown Thornbill												
Yellowrump Thornbill												
Orange-winged Sitella												
Brown Treecreeper												
Noisy Miner												
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater												
Fuscous Honeyeater												
White-plumed Honeyeater												
Brown-headed Honeyeater												
Spotted Pardalote												
Striated Pardalote												
Goldfinch												
House Sparrow												
Red-browed Finch												
Diamond Firetail												
Starling												
White-winged Chough												
Magpie Lark												
Dusky Woodswallow												
Magpie												
Grey Currawong												
Raven												
Little Raven												

BIRD LIST - BARKER'S CREEK

Species / Date					
Little Grebe					
Little Pied Cormorant					
Black Cormorant					
White-necked Heron					
White-faced Heron					
Little Egret					
Nankeen Night Heron					
Brown Bittern					
White Ibis					
Straw-necked Ibis					
Yellow-billed Spoonbill					
Black Duck					
Black-shouldered Kite					
Letter-winged Kite					
Whistling Kite					
Brown Goshawk					
Sparrowhawk					
Wedge-tailed Eagle					
Little Eagle					
Brown Quail					
Dusky Moorhen					
Coot					
Spur-winged Plover					
Domestic Pigeon					
Spotted Dove					
Peaceful Dove					
Common Bronzewing					
Galah					
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo					
Musk Lorikeet					
Little Lorikeet					
Budgerigah					
Crimson Rosella					
Eastern Rosella					
Red-rumped Parrot					
Pallid Cuckoo					
Fan-tailed Cuckoo					
Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo					
Boobook Owl					
Barn Owl					
Tawny Frogmouth					
Owlet Nightjar					
Spine-tail Swift					
Fork-tail Swift					
Kookaburra					
Sacred Kingfisher					
Bee-eater (Rainbow Bird)					
Welcome Swallow					
Fairy Martin					
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike					
Blackbird					
Flame Robin					
Scarlet Robin					
Red-capped Robin					
Hooded Robin					
Yellow Robin					
Shrike-tit					
Golden Whistler					
Rufous Whistler					
Grey Thrush					
Restless Flycatcher					
Grey Fantail					
Willie Wagtail					
Superb Blue Wren					
White-browed Scrub Wren					

Weebill					
Brown Thornbill					
Yellow-rumped Thornbill					
Striated Thornbill					
Orange-winged Sitella					
White-throated Treecreeper					
Red Wattlebird					
Yellow-faced Honeyeater					
White-eared Honeyeater					
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater					
White-plumed Honeyeater					
Brown-headed Honeyeater					
New Holland Honeyeater					
Eastern Spinebill					
Mistletoe bird					
Spotted Pardalote					
Yellow-rumped Pardalote					
Striated Pardalote					
Silvereye					
Goldfinch					
House Sparrow					
Red-browed Finch					
Zebra Finch					
Double-barred Finch					
Starling					
Olive-backed Oriole					
White-winged Chough					
Magpie Lark					
Masked Wood Swallow					
Magpie					
Grey Currawong					
Raven					

Dear Members of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter on behalf of the Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association, to congratulate the members of the club for their part in the Camp-out during the Labour Day week-end.

Despite the many commitments that a long week-end brings, the club members were out in force to make it a complete team effort, and a most enjoyable occasion.

Ern Perkins,
Secretary, W.V.F.N.C.A.

CAMP-OUT DATES FOR 1981

August 28-30 Colac. Camp-out to be held at the Bambra School camp site

October 17-18 Donald. First excursion at 1.30 p.m., Donald.

CLUB CALENDAR

Friday, April 10: Meeting. Speaker, Mr Kevin Waring of the Forests Commission of Victoria. Subject : Wood Chipping.

Saturday, April 11. Outing - Broken Bridge, Laanecoorie

Friday, May 8 Meeting: Members and visitors night.
Everyone bring a slide or two or a specimen or two or an observation to share.

Saturday May 9 Outing : Muckleford Forest. To inspect among other things, the area which was burnt during the recent bushfires.

Notes from the Committee Meeting

Business meetings are held at the Education Centre at 8 pm. on the fourth Thursday of the month. Non committee members are welcome to attend.

Frank Meyer presented the following financial report of the March camp-out.-

Receipts		Expenditure	
Supper collection	$34	Name tabs	$4-60
Donation	0-50	Safety pins	1-56
Sale of bulletins	1-40	Felt pen	0-65
Sale of sandwiches	2-00	Biscuits, tea, coffee	7-58
		Milk, tea	2-56
		Maldon tour Guide	10-00
		Hire of hall	20-00
Cost of weekend	42-41	Printing costs	33-36
Total	80-31	Total	80-31

President Geoff commented on the success of the weekend and commended Ern Perkins on his meticulous organisation which contributed so largely to that success.

Favourable letters were received from Benalla and Creswick offering their congratulations.

Ern Perkins expressed thanks to all the club members who made a contribution to the smooth running, and mentioned many of the major and minor tasks which were undertaken by them.

A Problem of Bird Identification

(OR - A Bird in the Hand is not always as easy as it looks).

When my wife returned from a recent trip to Geelong it was noticed that a small bird had been hit by the car and had become wedged between the bars of the radiator. Noticing the tan colour of the feathers I thought that a sparrow had been a trifle too slow getting out of the way. However, when I prised it out of the grill it was obvious that this was no sparrow, the long curved beak immediately suggested a Honeyeater. Although it was rather mangled I though it would be a pity to bury it without identifying it, so as it was unfamiliar I collected my copy of Slater and proceeded to go through it, thinking that there would be no problem with the bird right in front of me. But this was not to be. I searched through Slater without finding any Honeyeater which resembled my specimen. How can this be, I thought. A bird with two distinct rufous throat patches ought to be easy to identify, well maybe so, but my bird was not to be found in Slater, nor in Robin Hill.

I mentioned my problem that night to a friend, who next morning brought Officer's book of the Australian Honeyeaters and the Readers' Digest book. Well surely it ought to be in here somewhere. Perhaps it was but we were not able to find it. A mystery. A new species perhaps ?

Have run out of space so conclusion will have to wait till next issue. Clues :- rufous patches beside throat, buff bars in wing, curved beak)